



State of the City of West Lafayette 2011

February 6, 2012

I am gratified and honored to be the Mayor of our outstanding City, West Lafayette. I am proud to report that the state of the City in the opening days of 2012 is excellent. As temporary stewards of this beautiful place, our goal must be to prepare for each season as it comes so that every cycle gives us and future generations a better place to call home.

As city leaders, we can take a lesson from the monthly winners of the Beautification Award. The gardens they create come from hard work, careful planning and attention to details. If we in city government are the gardeners, the citizens clearly represent the forces of nature which make a garden sprout, thrive, and renew. Government cannot make the growth any more than a gardener, even a Master Gardener, can make the rain. However, we can do our best to manage the garden and make it a better place for now and the future.

Tending our City starts with keeping it safe. Under Police Chief Jason Dombkowski, our police department has seen an increase in overall service calls of nearly 18% while enjoying a decrease in criminal arrest by 2% in the year 2011. Enhancing quality of life issues and services continue to be the focus of the police department. As the Neighborhood Resource Team continues to blossom, 20% more calls for service were provided this past year. Partnering with Purdue University, the community, and student groups has created a 37% decrease in total alcohol arrests since 2007. A newly implemented vehicle lockout assistance service has served an average of two locked-out motorists per day since its inception. Focused traffic enforcement in school zones averaged approximately five traffic contacts per day. Overall, vehicle crashes have decreased by 15% and alcohol related crashes have decreased by 14%. Spearheaded by the newly-appointed Deputy Chief of Police Chris Leroux, our department has increased awareness

of impaired and dangerous driving, has educated and, where necessary, enforced mid-block crossing and bicycle safety campaigns in our busy, densely-populated city.

Under former Fire Chief Phil Drew, the City's insurance services office rating has increased from a six rating up to a four which places our fire department in the top 8% in the State of Indiana. Our citizens continue to rely upon the fire department to provide fire and medical runs which totaled 1,672 in the year 2011.

The newly-appointed Fire Chief Tim Heath will build on the spade work already done to finish the design and building of the new Fire Station No. 3. With enhanced education and training for fire and medical services, Chief Heath has made a commitment to renew and improve our highly-motivated firefighters.

In ways too numerous to mention, our city continues to thrive under the leadership of Director of Public Works and City Engineer, Dave Buck. The nagging problems of Lindberg Road have ended with the opening of the Lindberg Bridge. This long awaited project was coordinated beautifully by Dave and his staff to combine automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian transportation with access to the beautiful Celery Bog nature area.

Keeping transportation flowing is greatly enhanced by the first phase of the Purdue Perimeter Parkway. The improved Harrison Street will be a primary gateway to the city and Discovery Park from the new US 231 highway. Cumberland Avenue phase one is done and phase two, running from Yeager Road to Salisbury Street including a multi-use trail, is in the early stages.

By the end of 2012, Yeager Road phase one will be reconstructed featuring five lanes and a round-about; and all with 80% federal funding. Demanding and receiving continual attention, street resurfacing, sidewalk repairs, and ADA ramps received more than \$700,000 in funding in 2011. As of last August, Robinson Street was 100% complete all the way from River Road to Salisbury Street and for the first time ever, safe, accessible and continuous sidewalks line both sides of the entire street.

As a very promising sign of renewal in the economic outlook for our city, the Engineering department issued 609 building permits which, including Right-of-way permits, is almost double the number of permits issued in 2010. We are a very busy city and once again

safety for our youngest pedestrians was enhanced with the Safe Routes to School program in 2011.

As our citizens work hard every day, Joe Payne and the Parks and Recreation Department make our home more beautiful and fulfilling. In October, the oldest playground in the park system at University Farms was replaced with the help of neighborhood children. Closer to campus, the Tommy Johnston Park was re-dedicated with a new basketball court and the help of Purdue students who will provide spring and fall clean-ups in their newly-adopted city park. Continuing to grow the outstanding trail system, the Wabash Heritage Trail extension project along North River Road into Happy Hollow Park is nearly complete. This project will connect to the corner of Rose and Kingston Streets and will provide another parking area and picnic shelter for the much used Happy Hollow Park. More than eighteen miles of hard surface and off-the-road trails, and more than four miles of footpaths get a lot of use in our vibrant community. In cooperation with the West Lafayette Community School Corporation, more than 2,000 children participated in summer sports and camps. Thirty-eight teams of active adults enjoyed the recreational softball leagues and many seniors played weekly pick-up games.

Morton Center was alive with the Wabash Area Lifetime Learning Association, the 17th Annual Globalfest, and the Annual Spring Dance Recital. The Riverside Skating Center is sliding into its 10th season and serves as a focal point for the heavily used Tapawingo Park. Directly accessing the Wabash River, the West Lafayette Community Bay in the Purdue Boathouse is available for use by owners of personal watercraft. In cooperation among the West Lafayette Parks and Recreation Foundation, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and local businesses and organizations, the Celery Bog can now be viewed by web-cam at the Lilly Nature Center and on the Web. Thanks in large part to the Tree Fund Committee, West Lafayette was recognized as a Tree City USA for the 20th time, and the Master Gardeners Association and Purdue Extension have made the community gardens in Cumberland Park a cornucopia of produce. From modest beginnings, the Sagamore West Farmers Market now has 37 vendors who combined for more than \$300,000 in sales in 2011. The Parks and Recreation Department makes sure our quality of life keeps thriving.

It can be said that everyone in government talks about fiscal responsibility, but very few ever do anything about it. Our Clerk-Treasurer, Judy Rhodes, is one of those few. The more

complicated and uncertain local funding becomes, the more important it is to recognize Judy for her unparalleled competence in managing our precious tax dollars. Careful pruning has resulted in flourishing growth in City cash reserves. The City began 2011 with the smallest budget in four years and the 2012 budget is lower still. The year ended with stable fund balances that will enable us to move ahead with critical projects for roads and sewers, while keeping crucial reserves for city operations. The general fund cash reserves stand at 24% despite declining revenues from the levy and income taxes. Our firmly-grounded financial position has enabled our City to achieve an upgraded AA bond rating. This enhanced financial rating has helped achieve savings of \$311,000 on the police station bond refinance and the availability of installment contract financing for the new fire station at rates that saved \$154,000 over anticipated costs. More good news, a first look at our 2012 tax base shows that our city's assessed valuation is over 4% higher, up \$40 million to \$990,201,990. Because of this increase in assessed value, the city tax rate will be lower, down 1 cent, which is about 1% lower. This is a sign of the economic vitality and continued investment in our city.

I applaud this Council for its foresight and recognition of the daunting financial challenges we have faced in approving budgets which have worked wonders for our citizens in very difficult times. I truly believe that robust debate combined with collaboration here in this chamber can be viewed as a standard for other units of government to emulate. I look forward to working with you on the challenges that we will face together in the upcoming months including the completion of Council redistricting.

Another area of collaboration which continues to yield fruit is the Redevelopment Commission whose members have been carefully selected by Council and Mayoral appointments. Part of the relief from the financial drought which we face has come through Redevelopment Commission funding of vital City projects. The promise of TIF funding first begun decades ago has come to fruition for the citizens of West Lafayette.

Director of Development Chandler Poole continues to oversee the Department of Development and assist the Redevelopment Commission. As in all areas of government, trimming has reduced the RDC spending plan by more than \$2 million in order to allow for funding in the future for critical projects. Projects such as the Wabash Heritage Trail, Tommy Johnston Park, street resurfacing projects, alley renovations and improved community signage

have all received financial support. From designing Lindberg Bridge to improving water quality at Lindberg and Northwestern, the citizens continue to benefit from TIF funding.

The seeds of economic success planted previously have grown into jobs. Most notably, Dow AgroSciences continues to expand, now employing the most of any other business located at the Purdue Research Park. Projects such as IU Health's planned medical facility at Wabash Commons are a direct result of the efforts of the Director of Development. Cultural enhancements such as the Public Art Committee, the Sagamore West Farmers' Market, and the Purdue Boilermaker Half-Marathon show that quality of life indeed matters. The West Lafayette Historic Preservation Commission is meeting regularly and has been charged with creating an ordinance which will work for our community.

Community Development Block Grants have supported nine public service agencies and provided for 3,000 people in the areas of housing, support services for the elderly, domestic abuse victims, and individuals seeking self-sufficiency. New Chauncey Housing continues to use development funding to stabilize our near-campus neighborhoods. The RDC and Department of Development work hard and smart to continue to deliver the citizen driven strategic plan to the City in real, tangible ways.

Dave Downey continues to oversee an extremely cost effective and service driven organization in the West Lafayette Street Department. Despite record storms and snowfall in 2011, the street department kept traffic flowing safely. It took many hard-working employees to spread 2,000 tons of salt and sand on city streets during rough weather. Street sweepers removed almost 1,200 tons of debris off the streets and out of our wastewater collection stream. By changing to comingled recycling, the rate of recycling jumped from 22% to 28%. When added to composting, recycling in our city means that 44% of total waste stays out of the landfill. Further improvements are planned for recycling which will increase our sanitation department's commitment to citizen service and the improvement of our environment.

Nearly every week of the year, the Board of Public Works and Safety oversees the day-to-day business of our City. The Board of Works also oversees the award-winning wastewater treatment utility and insures that it is fiscally sound and responsive to the needs of our rate payors and the community-at-large.

The City is very fortunate to have Wastewater Director Dave Henderson involved in all phases of greening our City. Under Dave's expert direction, the wastewater plant now harvests 18% of its total electricity needs from the use of digesters and micro-turbines. This means 282 tons of food waste from Purdue University and 500,000 gallons of grease will never see a landfill. The recent completion of the Western Interceptor has finished the last milestone project for the City's original combined sewer-overflow long term control plan. Never content to lie fallow, our wastewater utility has now submitted a new CSO long-term control plan which will outline the next fifteen years of work to reduce combined sewer overflow into the Wabash River.

The community can grow when the wastewater plant does grow and we have recently received a construction permit allowing the wastewater plant to build an additional aeration tank to add plant capacity in 2012. The more I learn about the wastewater treatment utility, the more I realize that great things can come from unexpected places.

The citizens deserve and expect a lot from City government. The roots of excellence start among those of us in this room and branch out to those who provide protection, services at the front door step, and a high quality of life for the people of West Lafayette. I look forward to working together to make our home a true garden spot in the years to come.

Mayor John R. Dennis